Henry Arthur Jones at 69 Begins Life All Over Again

The Famous English Playwright Says He Is Too Young to Indulge in Reminiscences

His Trip to America Is for the Purpose of Filming Scenarios, but He Has Other Activities

By Arnold Prince

WHY should any of us despair?

In his seventieth year Henry Arthur Jones has begun writing for the "movies." For forty-two years he wrote plays for the vocal drama and for thirty years of that time was ranked with Pinero as one of England's greatest dramatists.

Now, when he is nearly threescore and ten, and as if in rebuke to those who hold that a man is well within the "lean and slippered pantaloon" period by then, he has begun work all over again.

His Present Labors

Here are a few of the things engaging his attention:

He has written four plays for the spoken drama and is looking about for suitable theaters in which to present them.

He has written three scenarios for the screen, one of which, at least, is to be presented soon, although the title had not been selected when this article was written.

He has material for two books and expects to write them soon.

He is continuing, with unabated vigor, his attack on the frivolous drama which he characterized as "romping imbecility and insidious sensuality."

He is exerting such influence as he possesses, by writing to the press, to check the spread of prohibition to England.

He is engaged in a stirring controversy with H. G. Wells on his views on Bolshevism in Russia and has been writing weekly letters to the newspapers in answer to the articles by Wells.

He is taking an active interest in other subjects of importance to the public, and says he feels as much like working now as ever before in his life.

Too Young for Recollections

He refuses to concede that age alone and not the condition of his faculties incapacitates a man for usefulness and labor, and his attitude was strikingly illustrated during an interview I had with him recently at the Hotel Brevoort, where he was staying. As he had known Matthew Arnold intimately, as well as Swinburne, William Morris and other celebrities, besides having had his plays acted by the most famous performers of England and America, I suggested that his recollections of these illustrious persons would be interesting. His answer was characteristic:

"Recollections? I am not ready for recollections! When you begin to recollect, you are living in the past. I want to belong to the present. I have still work to do."

Mr. Jones smiled and shook his head as if the question had started a train of thought which was not entirely pleasant.

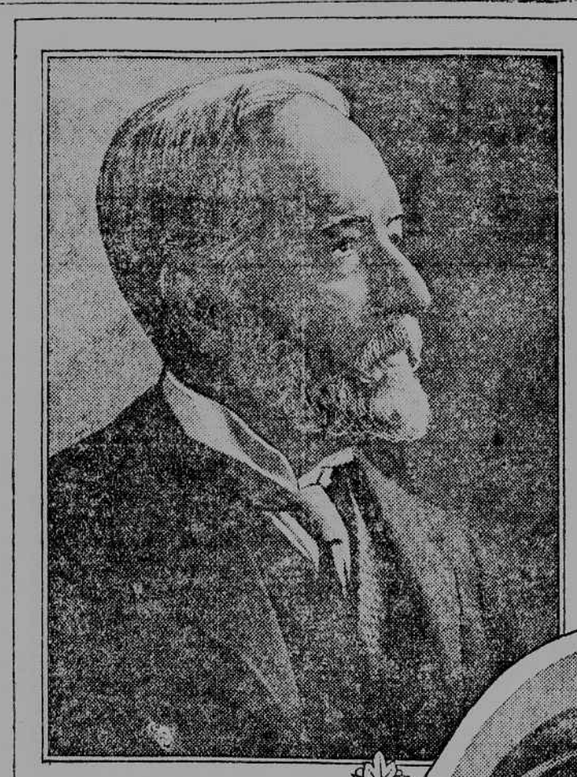
"Nor would I like to drag out an existence devoted entirely to the past," he said. "I wouldn't want to be like a rusty nail slowly being drawn out of a rotting plank. I should want to slip out quickly when my usefulness was over. An existence given over entirely to recollections would not appeal to me."

Whereupon, as if to demonstrate how far he was from having reached that stage, he began to discourse interestingly about the work he had in hand, the relative merits of the drama in America and England, the plays he hopes soon to produce and his admiration for the service to the world and the cause of the Allies that had been rendered by our soldiers in the World War.

The Changes of Time

There was nothing of the septuagenarian in his manner while he talked, and his easy, affable courtesy was that of a man with energy enough not alone to do his work, but enough left over to remain good natured and self-possessed. Mr. Jones had never neglected an opportunity in his plays to strike at narrowness and middle class bigotry, and he smiled again when I asked him if he had observed any marked change in social conditions in the years he had been writing for the drama.

"The particular narrowness of the '80s, illustrated in my play 'Saints and Sinners,' has disappeared, but only perhaps to give place to other traits making life uncomfortable," he said. "As, for example, trying to bring prohibition to England. Happily, so far, the 'pussyfoots' have been defeated in England. As a rule, I am against sedition of any sort, but in such a case as prohibition I would consider it almost excusable."



HENRY ARTHUR JONES, who at the age of 69 has begun writing for the movies

Never Been Drunk

Evidently the famous playwright feared that a wrong impression might be caused by what he said, for he was quick to add that he had never drunk to excess. He gave me a copy of a letter he had written to a London newspaper on the subject. It read:

I have never been drunk in my life, or in any condition approaching drunkenness, though, sometimes after dinner, I have felt myself more than usually well disposed toward my fellow creatures and more than usually inclined to think that the world is a very excellent place to live in.

I never drink between meals. I rarely take spirits. It would not be true to say I haven't had twenty "whiskies" in my life, but it would not give a wrong impression of my habits.

I have a very generous pity for those whose physical constitutions are not adapted for the consumption of a moderate amount of wine or good, wholesome beer. I have an even more generous and sorrowing compassion for those who are defrauded of this wholesome enjoyment by their moral scruples.

I lay my hand upon my breast and thank God that I am not as they are.

Still, I would by no means urge that they should be compelled to take even a moderate amount of alcohol against their will. I will be no party to any retaliatory measures upon them.

A Bottle a Day

If any man finds that he is better without alcohol, I think he should be allowed to abstain. I find that I am the better in health for my frugal bottle a day. And I think I should be allowed to take it. All that I ask of prohibitionists is that they should exercise the same toleration toward me that I am willing to exercise toward them.

Mr. Archibald Spofforth has recently started a movement which proposes that the most violent prohibitionists shall be subjected to experiments with the object of proving what quantity and quality of liquor is best adapted for the needs of the ordinary healthy man.

I do not say that prohibitionists do not stand badly in need of some such test. I do not say that it would not be beneficial to them both physically and morally. But it should not be forced upon them. I am strongly opposed to any form of retaliation.

I was once dining with Mark Twain in his New York home, and as the talk led that way I ventured a mild criticism upon the American national beverage—iced water. I said there wasn't much "body" in it. I further expressed some doubts as to its effect upon the national digestion.

"There are 80,000,000 of us," Mark replied, "and you must let us know what is best for us."

"I will," I replied cordially. "But I'm going to stick to champagne."

It was a fine vintage and I helped myself to another glass.

Mr. Jones said this letter summed up his views on the subject so admirably that he did not know how he could improve it.

No Progress in England

"I would not presume to discuss prohibition in the United States," he said, "but I am pleased that it has made no great progress in England."

The veteran dramatist touched on many subjects in the course of the interview, and the remarkable alertness of his mind was demonstrated by the incisiveness with which he expressed himself when asked to give his opinions. The talk drifted around to labor conditions in England, and Mr. Jones asserted that popular education as applied to the worker is all wrong. He recently aroused a storm of protest—at least among American readers—by expressing the same views in his book, Patriotism and Popular Education.

"Let a boy stay in school until he is eighteen years old and instruct him along the lines followed in the schools now, and he won't feel like going down into a mine or doing other necessary work," he says.

"Eighty-five per cent of our population have to earn their living by manual labor before the social machine will work. But we are educating about 85 per cent of them in England in such a way that they will hate and avoid manual labor. Inevitably, millions of homes do not get built. Inevitably, it is the workers who will suffer first and suffer most and suffer longest.

"For two generations we have been busily teaching our masses what they are only very remotely concerned to know, and have neglected to teach them—nay, have forbidden them to learn—what they are imperatively concerned to do and make."

As a cure for this Mr. Jones would revise popular education so that those needed for manual labor would not be weaned away from it by their learning at school.

Hates "Moral" Drama

But it is on the drama, perhaps, that Mr. Jones is best qualified to talk, and he has anything but admiration for conditions as they are to-day. He has frequently been accused of "taking himself too seriously" and believing that the mission of the stage was to educate, but he did not express himself quite so dogmatically in the talk I had with him.

"I hate plays with a moral," he said. "I hate social reformers trying to reform through the stage. I don't say you can't reform through the stage, but you must not set out to do it so obviously that the intention is detected.

"The theater does not, cannot and ought not teach directly and with obtrusive malice aforethought. When it sets out to do this it bores the good public, and they very emphatically resent its instruction. The theater should teach as nature teaches—indirectly, silently and implicitly, not by maxims and doctrines, but by faithful representations of character and life and manners. When it does this well, the result is wisely amusing or deeply interesting to intelligent folk."

But if Mr. Jones believes that the stage should not set out deliberately to uplift, he is even more firmly convinced that it should not set out actively to degrade. Recently he won attention in England by denouncing some plays "approaching avenues that lead to the brothel" and others which were merely "polypestiferous neo-tomfoolery."

He deplored again the disappearance of Shakespearean plays from the English theaters and the increasing popularity of musical comedies.

Too Much Musical Comedy

"The increasing popularity of the musical comedy, with its glittering show of banal music, bright dresses, empty dialogue and meaningless frivolity, gradually drove all serious work from our theaters," he said. "Nor can we expect any revival of English drama until English playgoers again recognize that the first and chief aim of the English theater should be to paint the realities of English life and character."

Mr. Jones said that the American stage was much more fortunate in the possession of great emotional actresses than the English.

"There is a great dearth of emotional English actresses," he said. "I have watched the American stage for some seasons, and in rendering of vivid passion and emotion I think the Americans may claim that for every accomplished actress in this class the English can show the Americans can show at least six."

Dialogue the Thing

The British dramatist believes that a theatrical production can win enduring renown only by its dialogue. That alone can live and find a place in literature. To write a successful play an author must have other gifts, he must depend a great deal on the scene painter, the upholsterer, the costumer and even the electrician. But if the play is to live it must have dialogue worthy of being remembered.

"The difference between 'Macbeth' or 'Hamlet' and a stock melodrama is that 'Macbeth' can be read and studied as literature," he said. "That is the reason they have held their place in our theater for 300 years. That is also the chief reason why they fail on our modern stage. They are literature."

Naturally, from this the talk went to Mr. Jones's views on motion pictures and his reason for becoming one of those writing them. He admitted that until recently the idea of writing for the screen had not occurred to him. Then one of the companies had offered him a large sum of money for the motion picture rights of one of his plays and he had accepted it.

"Movies" in Their Infancy

"As yet the film play is only in its babyhood," he said. "It has large possibilities which have not yet been explored. It has a most ductile and facile technique; a boundless comprehension of events; an almost diabolic power of suggestion and insinuation; an equally surprising power of vivid, startling contrast. It has infinite variety of action and world-wide freedom of movement. In all these respects the film offers to the dramatist lavish opportunities which are denied him in the spoken drama.

"The film has also a greater command and a truer presentation of landscape than the drama.

"Further, the drama, as it develops, may offer a refuge to the imaginative dramatist, now almost banished from our stage.

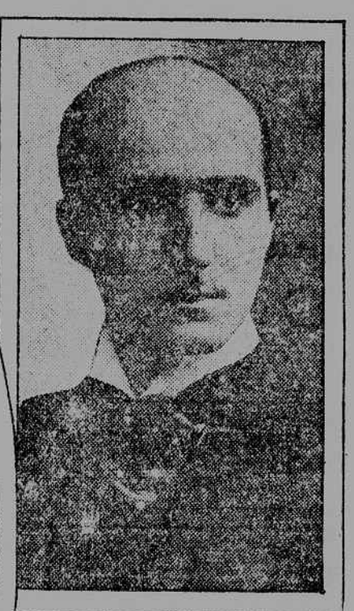
"But if the film play offers all these advantages to the dramatist, it cannot give him a laurel of enduring renown, 'a crown of deathless praise.'

"It is only words that are immortal, that outlast the Pyramids. A play has no permanent value or influence unless, in addition to winning an approved success in the theater, it also takes its place in its country's literature. Now, whatever triumphs the film may achieve, it will never offer more than a scanty and fugitive accommodation to literature."

Mr. Jones, as his letters in reply to Wells show, is opposed to Bolshevism, and his convictions were strengthened by the experiences had by Mrs. Lucien Arthur Jones, his daughter-in-law.

Mrs. Jones owned much land and property in Vienna, which was confiscated by the radicals of that country, her father-in-law says. She is an actress of talent and is known on the stage as Valerie Carlson. Her husband is a writer and was at one time on the staff of The Chicago Tribune.

MRS. LUCIEN ARTHUR JONES, daughter-in-law of Mr. Jones, who is known on the stage as Valerie Carlson



A. W. PINERO, English playwright

The Rise of an Immigrant

"I HAD five cents in my pocket and a piece of apple pie in my hand," said Professor M. I. Pupin, of Columbia University, describing the circumstances of his arrival in America in the steerage of the steamship Westphalia, which plied between New York and Hamburg a half century ago.

To-day that American scholar of Serbian birth modestly wears the scholastic affixes Ph.D., Sc.D. and LL.D., holds the chair in electro-mechanics at Columbia and is secretary of the Interracial Council of New York, an organization which includes leading men from among thirty-two racial groups in America.

Professor Pupin is merely one of a host of former immigrants whose names are linked with the great strides in science, commerce, finance and industry and whose careers furnish living proof of the statement that America, besides breeding great men, imports them.

In industry and commerce the stories of many of the successful immigrants read like romance. There is the story of the upward climb of C. C. A. Baldi, of Philadelphia, who began with nothing and is now one of America's foremost citizens of foreign birth. When he landed in this country thirty years ago he had only a few pennies in the pockets of his ragged trousers. He had no English and knew nothing of American customs, but he had heard of the opportunities that America offers to a wide-awake, ambitious immigrant willing to work.

Mr. Baldi bought thirty lemons with his few pennies. He peddled them and with the proceeds of sales bought more lemons and peddled them. Before long he had a cart loaded with hundreds of lemons. And as he went about selling them he studied America and learned a few words of English. These he increased day by day until he knew the language and had begun to understand the country. In time the pushcart became a store and the store grew into a great business with banking and other departments.

Mr. Baldi has five sons, all Americans. One is a member of the state legislature, one a doctor, another is a banker; the fourth son is a merchant and the fifth is editor and publisher of one of the largest American newspapers published in the Italian language.

Mr. Baldi's career is duplicated in some respects by that of John Gavazos, a Greek, who began his struggle for a livelihood twenty-five years ago with a capital of 75 cents. To-day he owns much valuable real estate in New York City. He recently acquired the Liberty Building at Wilmington, Del., for a consideration of $325,000.

Stories of successful foreign born abound in all parts of the country, waiting the dramatic touch of a Horatio Alger jr. to be put down in the cold permanence of print. From the Middle West comes this anecdote:

In St. Louis two young men, who, six years ago, worked as busboys in the Flanders and the Jefferson hotels at $1 a day, recently purchased two large motion picture theaters for $350,000. The two theaters increased their chain of film houses to nine, with a total annual revenue of $775,000.

The brothers are Charles Skouras, thirty years old, and Spryos Skouras, twenty-seven.

Other spectacular instances of success are furnished by the careers of Louis J. Horowitz, one of America's greatest builders, and S. M. Schatzkin, who came to this country twenty-five years ago with $3 carefully tucked away in his clothes, and began peddling coal in the East Side of New York. To-day Schatzkin has large sums invested in many big American enterprises.

In Westminster Abbey

THE thrills of a visit to Westminster Abbey at dusk are told by a correspondent in The London Times:

"More than thirty years ago," he writes, "I slipped into Cologne Cathedral one evening just before the doors were closed. There was no light in all the building except a few candles burning before one of the altars—an altar of the Virgin, if I remember rightly—on the north side. The immensity, the gloom, the silence, the mystery were overpowering. And the outcome was a set of very bad verses, of which the worst lines have viciously stuck in my memory ever since.

"Never again, I felt, was I likely to have such an experience; and I brooded over it until I could not tell how much was recollection and how much imagination. At least, as years went on and sensibilities became deadened, one was never likely to feel, even could one see, the awful beauty of such a glimpse. Yet, as one nail drives out another, so has that vision of Cologne Cathedral in the dusk been driven out by the vision of another building. Henceforth, when my mind goes wandering in those paths, it is Westminster Abbey that it will visit.

"On that summer night there was no sound of wind nor of rain, no whisper or echo from the strepitous life without. A glow from the organ loft, where a musician was very quietly letting the organ speak his reverent thoughts and mine; the single lamp lighting one or two to this part of the building and to that, yet seeming rather like such radiance as might shine from a guardian king or saint patrolling his last earthly home—these were all I had to see by; and more must have sharpened the detail to impart the spirit of the whole.

"Inevitably the eye goes upward. The slender columns of the tall arches soar like prayers; and the roof is no solid boundary, but, like the sky, an illusion of the infinite. As the lines seem, in the dusk, to meet, it is only because the spiritual perspective of these heaven-going aspirations plays a familiar trick on the finite bodily eye. All the base of them is in darkness. They spring from what is earthly in us, broad based on our human need for safety and support, on all that we have of gregariousness, congregational. Half way up they catch the light. They have leaped from earth to reach up toward heaven. They seem no longer to cluster together in the darkness. Arrowy, alert, determinate, they fling up on their certain way, to be lost again, not in darkness, but in that which the eye cannot see nor the reason define.

"Thus seen in the dusk and in a silence which the music only interpreted, the cruciform church was eloquent not only of mystery but of appeal. The builders of these monastic churches were not free from the thought: *Odi profanum vulgus et arceo.* Yet the plan can lure us in where the open pomp of a basilica works no incitement. Those arms, the transepts, seem to be reaching out from the breast and heart of the church into the great heedless world all about them. They would draw men, one feels, through loneliness and seclusion, gradually into the haven. And from the head, the high altar and the shrine of the king and saint behind it, spread out rays of love that vibrate, surely, far further than the sense can follow them. The shyness, the secrecy, the mystery of these stretched arms and remote head are such as will leave a man alone with his soul and his God, yet gather him with gentle compulsion, the force of his own will to know and to feel, ever nearer and nearer to the center."

"AT THE END OF THE ROUTE"—By Frederic Boutet

Translated by William L. McPherson

M. LINEUSE ran through the railroad station and had just time to jump aboard the train. At fifty-five he was still far from corpulent. But he was plainly winded and sank into a seat, mopping his grizzled temples.

There was one other person in the compartment, a woman, seated opposite him. M. Lineuse looked at her and gave a little start, for he thought he recognized her. She must have been more than ordinarily good looking in her day. Her hair, once blonde, had turned almost completely gray, and the years had left their mark on her regular features. M. Lineuse hesitated, searching his memory. She raised her eyes. Certainly he had seen those eyes before. And since, at the same moment, she also gave a start of surprise, seeming to recognize him, he thought that he ought to lift his hat and bow to her. As he did so he really recognized her. He felt his cheeks crimson. She stiffened up and showed a certain resentment.

"I beg your pardon, madame," M. Lineuse stammered. He was deeply disturbed and wished to excuse himself for having saluted her.

"It doesn't matter," she murmured in an embarrassed tone.

M. Lineuse said nothing more. He recalled the past, his love for her, their marriage, their brief happiness, their quarrels, more and more aggravated; then the divorce which freed them. He knew that she was thinking the same things. He tried to rediscover in her countenance the beauty of days gone by.

"I beg of you, monsieur," she said suddenly. "We have been strangers so long, spare me that examination."

M. Lineuse's feelings were hurt. He flushed again.

"I see that your character hasn't changed," he said curtly.

Her eyes blazed with irritation.

"You mean that your hatred of me has survived all these years."

"My hatred! Was it I who hated you? You know well that you never loved me, that it pleased you to torment me in every way, to make my life odious and intolerable by your caprices, your malevolence, your coquetry. Little by little you killed my love."

"Your love! It was made up of jealousy, egotism and tyranny."

"That isn't so! You wanted me to be your slave, submissive, obedient, blind."

"You made me suffer, without respite and without pity, until I revolted."

"It was I who first threw off the yoke."

They both sat erect, facing each other, consumed with wrath, as in the past. The grievances of those days, trifling or serious, surged up again in their minds and increased their anger. Suddenly Lineuse checked himself. He gave a faint smile.

"Mon Dieu," he said, "how ridiculous this is! These things have been dead for twenty-five years. What difference does it make whether you were in the wrong or I was? I beg your pardon. I should not have shown that I recognized you. I knew that you had married again, long ago."

She made no reply. He continued:

"I hope that you have been happy, and are still happy. I have no feeling against you."

"You are willing to pardon me for what you have made me suffer. What do you care whether I have been happy or not? Yes, I have been. Through all these years I lived peacefully—without quarrels, without jealousies. My husband was an excellent man."

"I have never thought of remarrying," said Lineuse. "I have traveled; I have enjoyed life as it came. I founded so many hopes of happiness on our marriage that it has been impossible for me to feel the same confidence again in any other woman. I was in the wrong, no doubt. But I am glad that you have found happiness."

She interrupted him:

"I am not happy. My husband is dead. My children are dead. My life is finished and I am alone—alone in the world."

She spoke slowly and her lips trembled.

"I, too, am alone," said Lineuse. "I am old and lonely. I live in the country, in the little house where we went to spend the first months of our married life. That was before our quarrels. The memories which surround me are happy memories. I think sometimes what our life might have been if—if we had agreed."

"That was impossible, you know well. Just now we quarreled again after so many years. I was able to get along with another. You would undoubtedly be able to get along with some one else. But we two together—that was impossible. You were never just to me."

"You used to say that before," observed Lineuse.

"Because it was always true. But don't let us talk about that again. I forgive you very sincerely for the past."

He moved impatiently in his seat and was about to make some answer. But she arose and began to collect her luggage.

"I am going to get off at the next station. I spend half of each year with my old cousin, Mme. de Ferrel. You remember her. It was at her house that we had our first serious quarrel. I don't remember what it was about. She is very old, very deaf and completely helpless. But with her I feel that I am not alone. You understand?"

"Yes, yes. I understand."

The train slowed down as it entered the station. She made ready to leave the car.

"Adieu," she said to Lineuse.

They looked at each other. A sentiment more imperious than their animosities seized them at the moment of parting. Lineuse expressed it.

"Helène, couldn't we see each other again? After so long old grudges weaken."

"We have proved that just now."

"That doesn't matter. Even if we quarrel again, that would be better than"——

"Yes, you are right," she murmured, avowing their mutual terror, "that would be better than to grow old alone."